

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-11, 23-28 and 30-32 are pending. Claims 1, 6, 9, and 30 have been amended. Claim 29 has been canceled. No new claim has been added. No new matter has been added.

The independent claims have been amended to clarify the recited features. Accordingly, Applicants believe the present amendments do not raise any new issue. Applicants note that the Examiner stated that "it would have been obvious for the image data to be presented along with the defect data and kill ratio data..." in paragraph 5 of the Final Office Action.

Claims 1-11 and 23-28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable by Steffan et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claim 1 is directed to a method for classifying defects. The method recites, "displaying on a screen said extracted defect candidate image together with first and second classification information, said first classification information relating to said first category, said second classification information relating to said second category, wherein said step of classifying said extracted defect candidate image into said second category is performed by comparing a circuit pattern area and a defect area, said circuit pattern area being obtained from a reference image and said defect area being obtained from said imaging step."

The Examiner stated that the above displaying step is disclosed or suggested in col. 4 and lines 65-67 and col. 5, lines 1-10 of Steffan. Applicants respectfully disagree. These sections of Steffan states that the defect information is stored in the defect management system 102 and are reviewed by various engineers. No where does it state that the image data and the first and second classification information (e.g., defect data and kill ratio data) are displayed in the same screen. Please refer to Fig. 18 and 19 of the present application for the exemplary illustrations of the recited feature.

The Examiner stated that "it would have been obvious for the image data to be presented along with the defect data and kill ratio data..." Applicants note, however, Steffan does not disclose or suggest such a feature. The Examiner, accordingly, appears to be using an

improper hindsight to reject the claimed invention. Claim 1 is allowable at least for the reasons set forth above.

Claim 6 recites, "displaying on a screen said extracted defect candidate image together with first and second information, said first information relating to said classification of defect type, and said second information relating to said evaluation of said criticality of defect, wherein said evaluating step is performed by comparing a circuit pattern area and a defect area, said circuit pattern area being obtained from a reference image, said defect area being derived from said imaging step, said extracted defect candidate image being extracted from said defect area." Steffan does not disclose or suggest these features. Claim 6 is allowable.

Claims 9 recites, "displaying on a single screen a distribution on said inspected object of said defect candidates classified in said first category together with first and second classification information, said first classification information relating to said first category, said second information relating to said second category, wherein said step of classifying said extracted defect candidate image into said second category is performed by comparing a circuit pattern area and a defect area, said circuit pattern area being obtained from a reference image and corresponding to said defect area on said reference image, said defect area being derived from said imaging step, said extracted defect candidate image being extracted from said defect area." Steffan does not disclose or suggest these features. Claim 9 is allowable.

Claim 30 recites, "displaying on a screen the image of the defect candidate together with first and second information, the first information relating to the first category, the second information relating to the killer/non-killer defect category." Steffan does not disclose these features. Claim 30 is allowable. Other claims depend from claims 1, 9 or 30 and are allowable at least for these reasons.

The Examiner also appears to have rejected the remaining claims. However, the remaining claims all depend from one of the independent claims above. Accordingly the remaining claims are allowable at least for the reason their independent claims are allowable.

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Amdt. dated November 7, 2003
Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 Expedited Procedure
Examining Group

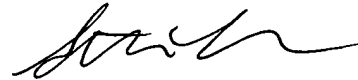
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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance and an action to that end is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 650-326-2400.

Respectfully submitted,



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